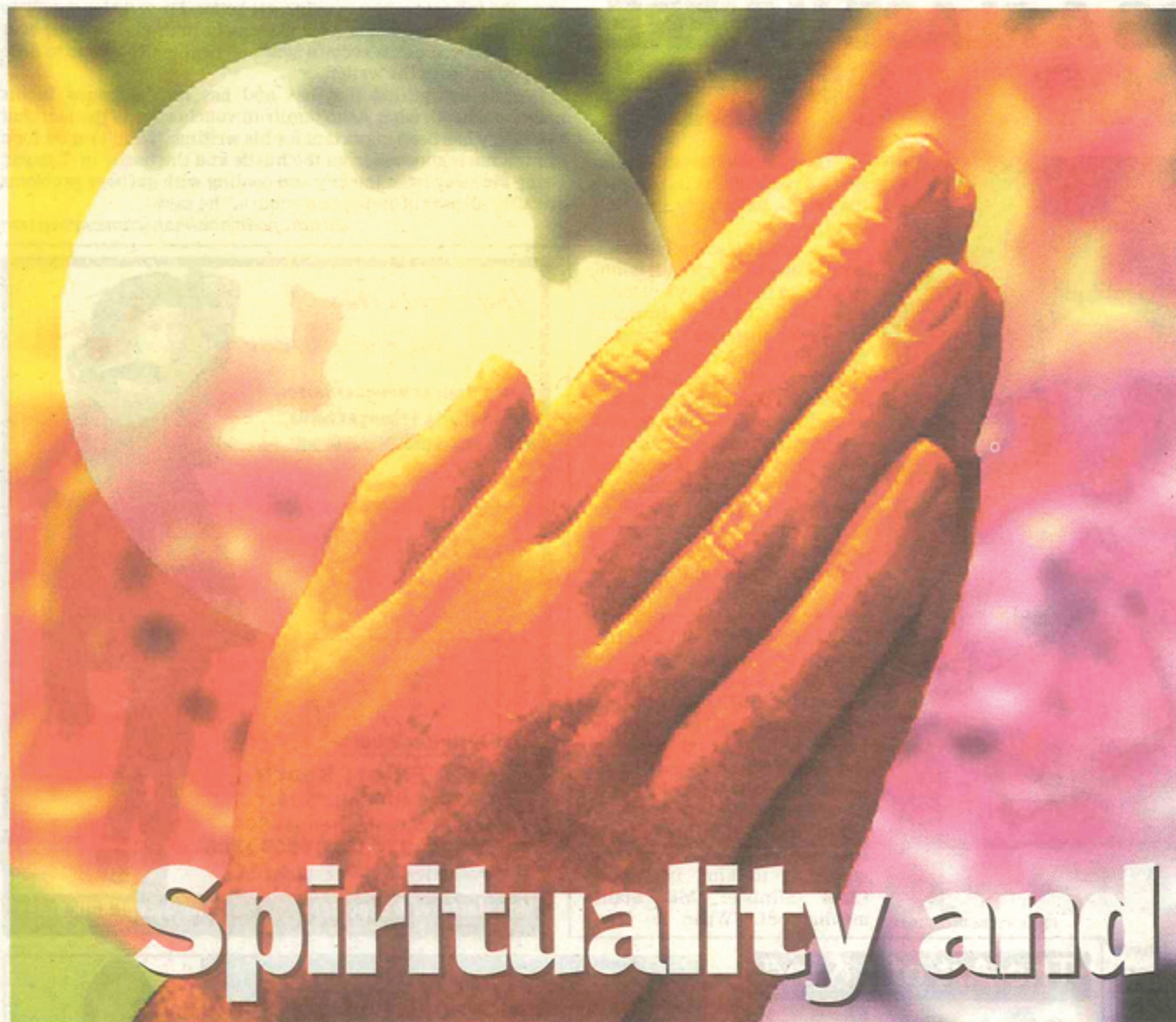


# 06 spirituality



Selfishness and inability to compromise seem to be the key reasons why families crumble. People expect the family and its members to live life in a certain manner based on their own pre-conceived notions

IN AN URBAN SETTING, ONE'S SPIRITUAL LIFE OFTEN TENDS TO TAKE A BACKSEAT. HERE'S A LOOK INTO HOW SPIRITUALITY AND FAMILY SHARE AN INTER-DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP WHICH IS INSTRUMENTAL FOR FAMILIAL PEACE AND PROSPERITY. SHRI TATWAMASI DIXIT WRITES ...

## Spirituality and family



SHRI TATWAMASI DIXIT

Varnashrama Dharma, describes duties to be performed according to the system of four varnas (social divisions) and four ashramas (stages in life). The varnas are the four classes of society viz Brahmins, Khatriyas, Vyshyas and Sudras. The four ashramas are as follows. Brahmacharya which is the learning phase, where one is educated in academics and skills to help him/her make a living later, Grahastha which is the worldly phase when a person enters into a family life through marriage and earns through experience and shoulders responsibilities in this phase, Vanaprastha which is the retirement phase when one has fulfilled most of his worldly duties and handed over the reins to subsequent generations, and Sanyasa, which is the phase of renunciation and deliverance from the world. It is important to note here that Vanaprastha doesn't really mean that one has to go away to the forest; it's symbolic of a person finding peace by moving closer to nature without interfering in others' lives.

The Grahasthashrama is therefore the phase for us to fulfill our duties in this lifetime. We are born with three types of duties or debts as described in the Vedas - Manushya Rinam, Pitru Rinam and Deva Rinam. These debts are overcome by performing certain duties:

**Manushya Rinam** - by increasing one's knowledge, by proper education that helps a person to become a responsible citizen.

**Pitru Rinam** - by continuing the family's legacy by begetting children

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who will imbibe family values and wealth.

**Deva Rinam** - by performing rituals and religious practices as prescribed by each respective faith and class of society that one belongs to. Therefore, the family is instrumental in especially neutralising Pitru Rinam.

A concept that is commonly discussed to show our progression as humans is that of I, You, We, and Us. When we are born, we are aware of only ourselves. We depend entirely on others for existence. Gradually we get introduced to relationships. Thus, the concept of You other than I gets introduced. The human then grows with these relationships, but is essentially singular till he gets married. Now he and his partner form a We relationship. The onset of We marks a family, which creates its own identity as a family and grows, thereby moving to the concept of Us, which engulfs everyone. Therefore, a person moves from dependence to independence to inter-dependence. When independence and the concept of I continues into the We and Us stage, there is disharmony in the family. When there are harmonious families, there is harmony in society and peace on the planet.

As summed up in a verse from

Nitishatakam:

*ayam nijah paro veti ganana  
laghuchetasam  
udaracharitanam tu vasudhaiva  
kutumbakam*

Today, one in every three marriages in the US end up in a divorce. India is not far behind. People seek help when the family is already falling apart. Selfishness and inability to compromise seem to be the key reasons why families crumble. People expect the family and its members to live life in a certain manner based on their own pre-conceived notions. This could be disastrous for families and the society at large, if people fail to see the family as an embodiment of spirituality, where each one respects the other and helps the other grow. In order to have your ideal family, it is imperative to take some time to design it the way you as a family would want it and define the family values that you live with and perpetuate it. I believe this is every citizen's social responsibility. The family thereby teaches you to co-habitat with diverse personalities with love and affection.

With the present day's changing scenario of a family, such an activity to design and define is a must. Furthermore, working parents who

frequently travel do not spend sufficient time with family. However, if the family is connected spiritually, physical distance would mean nothing as their spiritual closeness would keep them going. But those who are not spiritually and emotionally one with the family would not be close even if they have physical proximity.

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**M**atru Devo Bhava; Pitru Devo Bhava; Acharya Devo Bhava; Atithi Devo Bhava

Indian families transcend mere physical relationships into a realm of spirituality. We are all aware that a family is considered a sacred institution by all faiths; but what does a family really mean? Most of us rarely give a thought to what we really call a family. Often the family just gets accidentally designed and one tends to go along with the flow of things, taking the family and its members for granted. Spirituality in family harps on one basic tenet of respect towards one another and towards the entire institution called family. Let us try and understand how our role in the family and the family's harmony has a natural course in bringing about balance in our life and in society.

The ancient doctrine -